

CALIFORNIA BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION COMMITTEE (CAL/BECC)



A FOCUS OF CAL/BECC IS TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER BETWEEN ALL THREE CALIFORNIAS.



CALIFORNIA BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION COMMITTEE (CAL/BECC)

CALIFORNIA CONTACT:

Mr. Ricardo Martinez

Cal/BECC Coordinator

2014 T Street, Suite 130
Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: (916) 227-4328

Fax: (916) 227-4349

E-mail: martiner@cwpswrcb.ca.gov

BAJA CALIFORNIA CONTACT:

Mr. Ruben Sepulveda

Sub-Director de Normatividad

Direccion General de Ecologia

Via Oriente #1, Zona del Rio

Tijuana, Baja California

Tel: (66) 24-20-00 Ext. 2274

Fax: (66) 24-20-96

Correo Electronico:

ecologia@baja.gob.mx

BACKGROUND

Following the adoption of NAFTA, and the creation of the BECC and the NADBank, it was recognized that there would be advantages to Baja California and California from cooperating on border environmental infrastructure projects. At the July, 1994 meeting of the Commission of the Californias, the Governors of California, Baja California, and Baja California Sur signed a Joint Resolution which created the California Border Environmental Cooperation Committee (Cal/BECC). Cal/BECC is charged with identifying and promoting mutually agreed upon environmental infrastructure projects along the California-Baja California border region, and through the BECC and the NADBank, seeking government and private sector funding for those projects that are of joint benefit.

PURPOSE OF CAL/BECC

Cal/BECC is not intended to be an additional step or filter for projects seeking BECC certification. Cal/BECC's primary purpose is to assist in facilitating the BECC and NADB processes for local projects and it also acts as an advocate in what at times can appear to be a complex political process. The ten states that make up the US-Mexico border vie for monies allotted by the BECC and the NADB. Communities seeking BECC certification and NADB funding must be able to meet several criteria elements, which can add to planning costs, a burden at times for smaller communities. To that end, Cal/BECC seeks out potential projects and makes the initial contact, thereby providing guidance and support. Since many organizations can be involved in certification of a project, California has sought to streamline the process and avoid duplication of efforts. In 1997 the California Border Infrastructure Group (CBIG) was formed. CBIG is made up of representatives from USEPA, BECC, NADB, USDA and Cal/BECC. The group meets regularly and discusses strategies and best available funding resources for California projects seeking certification. Additionally, the forum also gives members an opportunity to provide constructive input on existing processes, programs and methodology. CBIG is an example of Cal/BECC's commitment to maximizing resources and communication, avoiding duplicative efforts and the need to act in concert and cooperatively with other agencies in streamlining processes, which in turn provides communities an expeditious BECC certification.

California is also working closely with Baja California and other U.S. border states to develop a small communities initiative that will allow them to access BECC and NADBank programs and funding.

COMPOSITION OF CAL/BECC

Cal/BECC has a seven member Board of Directors.

Three are from California: Mr. Peter M. Rooney, Secretary of California Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Lee Grissom, Secretary of Trade and Commerce, and one Public member from the Commission of the Californias, Ms. Joan Milke-Flores.

Three are from Baja California: Lic. Jorge Gallego Salas, Secretary of Economic Development, M.C. Adolfo Gonzalez Calvillo, Director of Ecology and Ing. Fernando Aveces Salmon, Secretary for Public Works and Human Settlements.

One is from Baja California Sur: Lic. Ramon Salido Almada, Secretary of Economic Development.

The Chair rotates annually between California and Baja California. Currently, the chair is held by Mr. Peter M. Rooney, Secretary for Cal/EPA.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since its inception in 1994 Cal/BECC has met eleven times to discuss areas of mutual interest in a frank and straightforward manner at a policy maker's level. The forum has established a relationship of trust and respect with our border neighbors that has promoted a higher level of binational cooperation. As a result of these meetings, the following accomplishments were achieved:

- Established state-to-state direct line of communication at cabinet and staff levels;
- Discussed environmental infrastructure projects, issues and barriers on both sides;
- Informed and advised each other of changes in state processes and procedures;
- Jointly supported six projects to the BECC; all were certified;
- Provided a forum to educate each other on organization, function and responsibilities of agencies in the environmental arena.

The first project to be certified by the BECC was the City of Brawley Water Treatment Plant. The need for a new water treatment plant in the City of Brawley became evident when the City was issued a notice of violation by the Department of Health Services for failure to meet drinking water and environmental management requirements, largely due to the city's growth. The old treatment plant was designed for a 7.5 million gallons per day (MGD) capacity and is currently operating at its physical capacity of 12.5 MGD. After certification, funding was secured through the NADB. Through concerted efforts the NADB served as a financial advisor and lead investor by committing to buy up to 30% of the bond issue. Successful issue resulted in the NADB purchasing \$ 1 million dollars in bonds. The original estimate on this project was \$24.8 million. To date, Brawley has worked diligently at moving forward with this project. Very recently, it was able to come in at an astounding 20% below the original estimate by creative sub-contracting on the project. This in turn has led to a higher number of contracts being awarded to local companies based in or near the community. Additionally, the idea of "regionalization"- use of one water or wastewater treatment plant that serves several neighboring communities- is being studied in the Imperial Valley. Regionalization, allows several communities to maximize their resources, share a common facility and helps reduce project costs.

In 1996-97 Cal/BECC under the direction of Mr. Adolfo Gonzalez Calvillo, supported and acted as an advocate for three projects seeking BECC certification. These included the Parallel Conveyance Project of the Sanitation System in Tijuana, Baja California, Eco-Parque water reclamation project in the City of Tijuana and the City of San Diego's South Bay Reclamation Plant.

During this period, the first Bi-State Environmental agencies Information exchange also took place in Tijuana Baja California. This first of its kind forum allowed Cal/EPA Boards and Departments and certain federal agencies to teach and learn from their Mexican counterparts on their agencies' respective role, function and responsibilities. The exchange provided working professionals a network to begin discussions on environmental issues of mutual interest and concern. And, at the same time to observe how current projects coincide or dove-tail into USEPA's Border XXI program.

In 1997-98, the chair rotated and California assumed the role. Under the direction of Mr. Peter M. Rooney, Cal/BECC supported and provided technical assistance for the New River Sanitation project in the City of Mexicali, Baja California. The project was certified in early 1998 and is estimated to cost approximately \$50 million dollars to bring to fruition. This project marks a new beginning in the clean-up of the New River. For the remainder of the term, it is anticipated that three more projects in California will be seeking BECC certification and some type of grant funding. Cal/BECC in association with other agencies and organizations, is committed to providing assistance to project proponents

to ensure they fulfill the necessary requirements to receive BECC certification and the fullest extent of funding from NADB and other funding sources.

OTHER PROJECTS THAT HAVE HAD CAL/BECC'S SUPPORT ARE:

- 1) Environmental Improvement and Urban Development Project for Phase III of the Tijuana River in Tijuana,
- 2) Rehabilitation and Improvement of the Water Delivery System for the City of Calexico, California

Cal/BECC attempts to be represented at the NADBank and BECC Public meetings to provide input on issues impacting the Californias. Regardless if a project is seeking certification, attendance at these meetings at times can be crucial due to the many issues covered which can affect policy and procedures in California.

To meet the increasing demand for involvement by California in working with BECC, NADBank, and various Federal agencies, a Cal/BECC Coordinator position was created within the California Environmental Protection Agency organization at the Water Resources Control Board. The Coordinator monitors BECC activities in the ten border states and Mexico, acts as coordinator for Cal/BECC, as environmental liaison between California and Mexico, and provides administrative support by assisting the federal, state and local government, business and citizen groups in the Development of projects for BECC certification and NADBank funding.

Cal/BECC has already established a track record of success and credibility with BECC and NADBank, who hold it up as a model of cooperation for the other states. In the coming year, Cal/BECC will continue to work closely with the BECC and NADBank, local agencies and other state agencies on both sides of the border to identify environmental infrastructure projects, promote projects from the Californias, provide assistance, and support them through coordination with BECC and NADBank. Cal/BECC has strengthened the relationship among the Californias, improved lines of communication and created a forum for cooperation on environmental issues of mutual interest.

CAL/BECC IS CURRENTLY ADDRESSING OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES THAT INCLUDE:

- New River clean up
- Tire recycling along the Border
- Training and public education opportunities
- Establishing Bi-State communication at all levels

Cal/BECC also acts as the central coordinating axis for the California Border Coordinators Group. A group consisting of approximately 14 State Boards and departments that participate in projects along the border region.